

# School-to-Nature



## Butternut Tree (also called White Walnut)

The Butternut tree is considered a treasure in the Conservancy's Tabor Woods, because it is an "old growth" tree, a historic example of the great forests that covered the northeastern U.S. and parts of southern Canada. Its Latin name is *Juglans Cinerea*, and it is a close relative of the American Walnut tree. It is also a treasure because Butternut trees are becoming scarce, due to disease and development.

This tree can grow quickly from its own seeds, but it lives only about 75 years. It can reach 65 feet tall, with a sturdy trunk as you can see in the photos. These trees prefer areas where there is sun, and they like some moisture in the soil. Look for a Butternut tree near the outer edge of an older forest where there is more sun.

Starting at about the age of 20, Butternut trees make large nuts that ripen in the autumn. These are eaten by both animals and people. Many Native Americans and early settlers harvested butternuts (as well as other native nuts) to save for their winter food. The nuts are rich in protein, vitamins, and minerals. They are a good source of beta-carotene. They have antioxidant properties that can increase immunity and decrease the risk of cancer. They are also rich in omega-3 fatty acids.



The bark and nut rinds were once used to dye clothes a light yellow to dark brown. Some people, including Confederate soldiers, got the name "Butternuts" because they wore homespun clothes dyed brown from butternut. Historically the inner bark of the Butternut was used to make an extract to treat smallpox, and stomach / intestinal ailments. The Butternut is a treasure, indeed.

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**Caledonia Conservancy | P.O. Box 044714 | Racine, WI | 53404**  
**262-498-4993 | [www.CaledoniaConservancy.org](http://www.CaledoniaConservancy.org)**